

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for Pregnancy and Postpartum Care

There is a lot more to learn about infection with the novel coronavirus in pregnancy but the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (DPH) wants to share the best information we have now so you can make good decisions about your own care and keep yourself and your baby healthy.

Key Points

1. Take extra care to avoid getting sick while you are pregnant.
2. We do not yet know if the virus that causes COVID-19 poses a risk during pregnancy. There have been a few reports of preterm birth in people who were infected, but it is not clear whether these cases were caused by the virus or by other causes.
3. Even though we do not fully understand the risks of the virus, most people who have become sick during pregnancy so far have gone on to have babies that do not show any signs of harm.
4. Mothers who are infected with COVID-19 can breastfeed. If you are sick, you can take simple steps so your baby does not become sick.

Special Concerns in Pregnancy

- Pregnant people are at higher risk than other people from diseases caused by infection. This is due to the various changes that people experience in their bodies while they are pregnant. There is no evidence so far that pregnant people are becoming infected with COVID-19 more often than other people, but we don't know enough to say for sure. So, it makes sense to be extra careful.
- One symptom of the COVID-19 infection can be fever. We do not know just how much of a risk fever is for human babies, but it makes sense not to take chances. If you are pregnant and experience symptoms of COVID-19, make sure you call your OB-GYN or health care provider early.

How to Minimize Risk

Practice everyday personal protection practices. Do all the things everyone should do to avoid catching the virus, but with a little extra care:

- Stay home. Avoid contact with people who are sick.
 - If you are an essential employee and must continue working, ask your employer about teleworking or flexing your hours so you are traveling and at work when there are fewer people around.
 - Talk to your doctor or healthcare provider about your prenatal or postpartum visits. They may be able to use telehealth for some of your visits, or schedule visits when their office is not crowded.
- Have food delivered to your home so you can avoid checkout lines at grocery stores.
 - Ask if family, social, or commercial networks can bring food to you.
 - If you are enrolled in WIC, ask your WIC program if you can participate without having to come into the WIC office or have food delivered to your home.
- Take extra care with infection control.
 - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing, or using the restroom.

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- If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- To the extent possible, avoid touching high-touch surfaces in public places – elevator buttons, door handles, and handrails.
- Wash your hands after touching surfaces in public places.
- Be more aware and practice respiratory etiquette, such as sneezing into a tissue or covering your cough by using your elbow.
- Avoid touching objects or surfaces, then touching your mouth, nose, or eyes before washing your hands.
- Clean and disinfect your home to remove germs: practice routine cleaning of frequently touched surfaces (for example: tables, doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, toilets, faucets, sinks & cell phones).
- Avoid crowds, especially in poorly ventilated spaces. Your risk of exposure to respiratory viruses like COVID-19 may increase in crowded, closed-in settings with little air circulation if there are people in the crowd who are sick.
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.

What to do if You Get Sick while Pregnant

- Prepare in advance for this possibility. Make sure you will be able to manage if you get sick.
 - Consult with your health care provider about symptoms of COVID-19 that you should know and watch for. These generally include fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing.
 - Ask your doctor what over-the-counter medications would be safest for you to take if you get sick, and then make sure to have those products on hand, along with tissues and anything else you will need to be comfortable if you are sick at home.
- Always keep a list of your emergency family contacts and immediate supports. Stay in touch with other people by phone or email. Let them know you are taking extra care to avoid getting sick and ask for help if you need it.
- If you get sick:
 - Stay home! Call your doctor or healthcare provider to let them know about your symptoms. You may want to contact both your regular doctor and your obstetrician/ midwife in case they have any special guidance to keep your pregnancy safe.
 - Most pregnant people who have gotten sick in other parts of the world have not had to go to the hospital, so if you get sick you will probably be able to stay home. Take care of yourself as you would with a cold or the flu: rest, drink liquids, use over-the-counter medications that your doctor recommends to control fever.
 - If you get help from a home visitor, a doula, WIC or any other pregnancy support program, be sure to call ahead and let them know you are sick and ask for help with home food delivery and other needs. You can also turn to them for emotional support and if getting sick while you are pregnant is getting you down.
 - Get medical attention immediately if your condition gets worse. Signs to look for are:
 - Very high fever

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- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- Mental confusion
- Bluish lips or face

When the Baby Comes

- Hospitals are generally limiting entry by anyone other than patients and staff. As a result, you may be limited in who can be with you at the time of delivery. You may have to choose between a partner and a birth attendant, for example. Do check on the policy at your hospital and modify your plans if you need to. You may be able to have a second person “with” you by using Skype or Facetime or another online option.
- Limits on visitors will also apply once the baby is born. This is to protect all of their patients and staff, but it is also to protect you and your baby. Let family and friends know what the rules are and make arrangements to connect in other ways.
- If you are infected at the time of delivery, current guidelines call for doctors to proceed with whatever type of delivery (vaginal or c-section) was already planned, unless there is some other reason to make a change in plans. Your hospital may, however, take extra precautions to keep you, the baby, and healthcare staff safe during the delivery. These may include:
 - Limiting the number of people who can stay with you or visit you.
 - Discharging you from the hospital as soon as possible.
 - Having your baby in a separate room from you.
 - Taking extra care that you wash your hands and wear a mask before holding the baby.
- Upon hospital discharge and once you are home with your newborn:
 - You, the baby, and anyone who was with you in the hospital should stay at home for fourteen (14) days, even if you have had no symptoms of illness. Do not let anyone come visit you or the baby for those 14 days. It is especially important to put off visits by relatives over age 65, who are at greater risk for getting very sick from COVID-19. It can be hard not to see a new grandbaby right away, but it is the healthiest choice for everyone.
 - It is also very normal to need help caring for a newborn and while recovering from childbirth. If anyone (partner, family member, friend, doula) does help you care for yourself and the baby, make sure you both are hand washing, wiping down all surfaces, and practicing social distancing as much as possible. It is ideal if anyone caring for you and the newborn stays for an extended period, as opposed to going in and out of the home repeatedly.
 - Family members confirmed with COVID-19 should be separate from you and practice isolation.

Things to know about breastfeeding

- Breast milk provides protection against many illnesses and is therefore important for your baby. In fact, as in almost all cases, breastmilk is the best food you can give your baby.
- If you are trying to breastfeed while you are sick,
 - Wash your hands before touching the baby.

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- Wear a face mask, if possible, while feeding at the breast.
- If expressing breast milk with a breast pump, wash your hands before touching any pump or bottle part and get instructions from hospital staff about cleaning the pump after each use.
- If possible, consider having someone who is not sick feed the expressed breast milk to the infant.
- There are many breastfeeding support services and groups online and by phone, from your clinic, hospital, and lactation consultants and doulas. Please first try to get support virtually before going anywhere in person.

Stay Positive!

- Use your social supports.
 - Stay connected to friends and family and ask them for help with food needs, caring for older children and emotional support
 - Build and maintain your virtual community
 - Enlist the help of your partner or the baby's father.
- Expect to recover without lasting harm and to have a healthy baby.

Additional Information

Los Angeles County Department of Public Health has staff members whom you can talk to for free M-F, 8:00AM – 5:00PM.

- If you need support or information of any kind during pregnancy or if you are feeling low, call 213-639-6439.
- If you feel panicked or anxious, seek help from friends, family, your pregnancy support program or a mental health professional. You can also call the previous number.
- More resources and additional information are available at these links:
 - CDC Guidance of Pregnancy and Breastfeeding: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/pregnancy-breastfeeding.html>
 - Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health Access Center 24/7 Helpline (800) 854-7771 (562) 651-2549 TDD/TTY <https://dmh.lacounty.gov>
 - Los Angeles County Department of Public Health: <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
 - Call 2-1-1 for more information
 - National Perinatal Association: <http://www.nationalperinatal.org/COVID-19>
 - American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology: <https://www.acog.org/Clinical-Guidance-andPublications/Practice-Advisories/Practice-Advisory-Novel-Coronavirus2019>
 - American Academy of Pediatrics: <https://www.aappublications.org/news/2020/03/12/coronavirus031220>
 - <https://legalaiddatwork.org/our-programs/work-and-family-program/>
 - https://www.edd.ca.gov/Disability/about_pfl.htm